

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 31, line 10, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The noises contained in the thinned layer image thus formed are recognized (ST16). More specifically, the shape of each line contained in the thinned layer image is recognized separately so as to detect the lines that are considered as noises. Then, the layer differential image is subjected to a noise removal process (ST17). In other words, the lines considered as noises and detected at Step ST16 are removed from the layer differential image which has been subjected to the binary process. Fig. 18 shows a layer ~~partial~~differential image (noise removed) formed by the noise removal process.